9:Stewart E-5 (1936) 1937
NR13 Northern Paiute NR13

American Anthropologist

NEW SERIES

ORGAN OF THE AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION, THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON, THE AMERICAN ETHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW YORK AND THE PHILADELPHIA ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY

LESLIE SPIER, *Editor*
MELVILLE J. HERSKOVITS, CORNELIUS OSGOOD, F. H. H. ROBERTS, JR., AND FRANK SPECK, *Associate Editors*

VOLUME 39

MENASHA, WISCONSIN, U. S. A.

PUBLISHED BY

THE AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

[Title Page] 1937

9:Stewart E-5 (1936) 1937
NR13 Northern Paiute NR13

NORTHERN PAIUTE POLYANDRY

[114]
595

In his article *Shoshoni Polyandry*,[1] Dr Julian H. Steward said, "It is reasonably certain that it [polyandry] was not practiced by the Shoshoni of southern Nevada nor by the adjoining Northern Paiute." During the summer of 1936, while making a culture element survey of the Northern Paiute for the University of California, I recorded the presence of polyandry among five of the eleven Northern Paiute bands visited. The bands admitting polyandry are now located at Burns in Oregon;

101
595

[1] Pages 563, 564. [3] Page 562.
[2] Page 561.
[1] American Anthropologist, Vol. 38, pp. 561–64, 1936.

[Pg. 368]

9:Stewart E-5 (1936) 1937
NR13 Northern Paiute NR13

and at Pyramid Lake (Nixon), McDermitt, Winnemucca, and Owyhee in Nevada. 101 595
The bands at Winnemucca and Owyhee are on the border between Paiute and Shoshoni peoples and probably were influenced by the Shoshoni in regard to marriage, as we know they were influenced in regard to other traits.

The informants at Winnemucca gave no details concerning polyandry, but at 595
Owyhee I obtained a fair account of a present-day case which involved both Shoshoni and Paiute. At this reservation a Shoshoni woman was married for a long time to a Shoshoni man. A few years ago a young Paiute man started living with them; all three slept in the same bed. However, as the first husband was quite senile, sexual relations were only between the woman and her second husband. I should state that at the present time both Paiute and Shoshoni live on the Owyhee Reservation. However, my informant assured me that polyandry was known among the Paiute when they lived in Oregon about a hundred miles to the northwest.

At Burns, Oregon, the strongly Catholic informants gave no information beyond [595]
the admission that "old time Paiute women sometimes had two husbands at once." While at McDermitt, I was told that "right now a woman here has two husbands who are not brothers." But the informant went on to say that polyandry would not have been allowed in the old days. Although a hundred and twenty-five difficult miles separate the two, the McDermitt Indians have had much contact with the Shoshoni since the establishment of the Owyhee Reservation in 1877.

The most detailed evidence of Northern Paiute polyandry was obtained at Pyramid Lake, which is located in about the center of this area. On this reservation is a woman who has lived with two men for many years. The men are not brothers, and, my informants said, they share equally sexual privileges and economic burdens. The children call both men father, and together the men work their land. Unfortunately, no details could be had concerning any pre-contact cases at Pyramid Lake, although both informants had heard that in the old days women sometimes had more than one husband at a time.

However, polyandry was not a common feature in Northern Paiute social life, and it was not institutionalized. Dr Steward's explanation of Shoshoni polyandry as a result of the relative lack of male jealousy and the "extraordinary simplicity of social structure which made the relationship of both sexes to plural marriage almost identical" could also apply to Northern Paiute polyandry.

OMER C. STEWART

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA